

School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Shirley Middle School  
June 30, 2004

Present: Gary Bourassa, Chairperson  
Hugh Muffoletto, Vice Chairperson  
Paul Wilson  
Bob Prescott  
Don Parker

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent  
Patricia Stern, Business Manager  
Kyle Keady, Town Administrator  
Joe Deguglielmo, DEAC  
Mike Smith, FinCom  
Chip Guercio, Selectman  
Debbie Flagg, Teacher  
Joyce Reischutz

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the options available to the school committee now that the override vote failed.

It was suggested that a hiring freeze be implemented until the budget can be resolved. Dr. Scott informed that committee that there are several positions that the district is currently trying to fill. These positions include Director of Instruction, several SPED teachers and a grade 6 English teacher. These positions are not new positions, only vacant ones. Mr. Muffoletto stated that if the funds aren't available for these positions, classroom sizes may need to be reconfigured.

Dr. Scott stated that it was his understanding that if the override failed the town would look into ways to solve the deficit. Kyle Keady, Town Administrator, stated that was not his understanding. However, he did state that the governor should be releasing approximately \$100 million in lottery revenue of which \$155,000 - \$157, 000 is expected to be released to Shirley. Mr. Keady stated that he is cautiously optimistic that this will take place in July, as well as the restoration of mitigation funds to the Town of Shirley.

Mr. Keady, on short notice prior to the meeting, was able to put together a budget overview. This overview was prepared for the purpose of showing the magnitude of the school's impact on the budget. This document reflected approximately 60% of the town's budget is school related. Chip Guercio, Selectman, stated that the shortfall of \$422, 425.00 could be spread across every department in town resulting in a 10% cut. If the shortfall was spread across all non- school departments, staff reductions and future funding would be in jeopardy. Mr. Guercio also stated that the Selectmen are willing to host meetings to help resolve the current situation. He also stated that since the state has not come through with the money owed to the Town of Shirley, the town budget might be better or worse than it currently is.

The school committee and Dr. Scott would like to resolve the budget issues so that any staff changes can be done in a timely basis. This would allow those staff members who need to find a

new position sufficient time to look for one as well as allowing the school district to be able to select from a wider pool of candidates to fill any position that may need to be filled.

The committee was questioned as to whether or not it would be beneficial to close the Center and Devens schools. Center School is a self-supporting program and has limited impact on the budget. If the school were to close, only to be reopened later, the building would have to be brought back up to code – a very costly proposition. If the Devens School were to close, it would result in the loss of \$80,000 in grant money as well as the cost of renovating LAW classrooms to accommodate the young students. The \$50,000 rental fee would need to be paid whether or not we occupied the school. Bus fees, previously approved and then voted out when the override vote was planned, are currently under review as a means to reduce the budget deficit. The possibility of private fundraising was also mentioned.

The committee motioned to have Dr. Scott determine what cuts would be necessary to reduce the budget by \$422,425.00 and bring those recommendations to the next school committee meeting for review on July 20, 2004. The motion was seconded and approved. Mr. Keady was hopeful that by the next school committee meeting the state might have information on when the lottery revenue would be available.

Debbie Flagg, Middle School teacher, commented that the only place left to cut is in the staffing. She asked that the committee not wait until the next meeting to look into staff cuts. This would not allow adequate time for those affected to make the necessary arrangements for the current school year. A meeting was subsequently scheduled for July 6, 2004, comprised of members of the various town offices, to review the budget. Mr. Guercio would head the subcommittee and this meeting, as well as any others that would be needed, would be made open to the public.

Joyce Reischutz, community member, stated that another town had tried for a second override after their first one failed. Perhaps this would be an alternative to the cuts. The committee decided against this suggestion.

A motion was made by Mr. Muffoletto to freeze all staff hiring until a solution about the budget has been found. The motion was seconded by Mr. Parker. However, in discussion, the motion was amended to include that all hiring be stopped unless authorized by the school committee. The motion, with the amendment, was approved.

With regard to the hiring freeze, Dr. Scott stated that he is actively looking to fill two positions – the Director of Instruction and an elementary guidance counselor. As the guidance counselor falls under the Devens funding, Dr. Scott stated that this position doesn't impact the budget and he would like to fill that position. A motion was made by Mr. Prescott to allow Dr. Scott to hire an elementary guidance counselor. The motion was seconded by Mr. Muffoletto. Don Parker voted "No", all others voted "Yes". Motion was approved.

Mr. Parker explained his vote by stating that the original positions to be hired with the Devens funds were Behavior Intervention Specialists for the elementary and middle schools. It was decided during this current school year to replace the elementary position with a Remedial Education teacher and then again with a guidance counselor. Mr. Parker stated that if the Devens money could pay for either of those positions, why couldn't it be used to hire a classroom teacher so that classroom sizes can be reduced. In response to Mr. Parker's question, it was explained that the original contract was for 2 behavior specialists and the decision to hire a remedial education teacher was perhaps stretching the concept a bit too far. The decision to hire a guidance counselor, also stretching the concept, would be more appropriate.

Patricia Stern, Business Manager, informed the committee that the custodial department has been reorganized because of recent staff changes. The custodial supervisor, formerly a full time calendar year position would be reduced to a 2.5 hour per day, calendar year position. This new structure would reduce the custodial budget as well as allowing it to run more efficiently. Mrs. Stern indicated that there is currently an advertisement for custodial positions in the local newspaper. She stated that she has not hired anyone, and when she does she will meet with Dr. Scott to obtain approval. Mr. Parker expressed his concern about hiring anyone, regardless of the new custodial structure. Perhaps a stipend could be given to a current employee who would assume some of the supervisor's responsibilities.

Dr. Scott was questioned about the Director of Instructor position. He explained that a 14 member group met with three candidates and presented the resume of the top choice for the position. He reviewed her qualifications as well as some of the concerns that the interview committee expressed. Dr. Scott indicated that he would like to meet with her to discuss those concerns. Mr. Parker, who was part of the interviewing process, asked if there were any additional candidates. Dr. Scott indicated that he had received 2 additional applications, of which one looked promising. Mr. Parker asked that Dr. Scott readvertise or continue looking for a qualified candidate. Mr. Prescott, also present for the interviews, expressed his concern that Dr. Scott's candidate was not qualified enough to handle the SPED Director responsibilities. He stated that perhaps in trying to fill this position we have broadened the criteria too wide to find a candidate who will meet all of those criteria. It was suggested that Dr. Scott to interview the additional candidate of interest.

The Town of Shirley website address, [www.shirley-ma.gov](http://www.shirley-ma.gov), was announced to everyone in attendance. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Karen Gutheil